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CIA 3.03 Cuba

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Kennedy, Robert F.

Soc. 11.01.2 Thirteen Days

Cuba--1962 and 1970

It was during the early autumn days of September-October, 1962, that U. S. intelligence exposed the introduction by Russia of surface-to-surface nuclear missiles into Cuba and the administration of President John F. Kennedy prepared a course of action to have the weapons removed.

Eight years later, almost to the day, another direct Russian threat to U. S. security may be taking shape in the Caribbean. As in 1962, circumstances may have led the Russians to misunderstand the American mood. That may be the reason the Nixon Administration has chosen to warn the Soviets before irrefutable evidence of the Russians' intentions is in.

During 1962, the Kennedy Administration's Bay of Pigs fiasco was fresh in Russian memory as a sign of American timidity. Now, during the Nixon Administration, the Soviets may be interpreting America's withdrawal from Vietnam and the shrill anti-war protests here at home as open invitations to renew their attempts to introduce offensive weapons into the Western Hemisphere.

Of course the Russians' pooh-pooh U. S. fears that a strategic submarine base is to be the end result of the activity at Cienfuegos on the southern coast of Castro's Cuba, but if the 1962 missile crisis teaches us anything it is to be skeptical of any Russian denials.

In his book, *Thirteen Days*, an account of the Cuban missile crisis, Robert F. Kennedy recounted numerous promises by top Soviet leaders that no offensive missiles had been or would

be sent to Cuba. Some of the promises came even as American intelligence was confirming the rapid preparation of missile sites.

"Now, as the representatives of the CIA explained the U-2 photographs that morning. Tuesday, October 16, we realized that it had been lies, one gigantic fabric of lies," he wrote. "The Russians were putting missiles in Cuba, and they had been shipping them there and beginning the construction of the sites at the same time those various private and public assurances were being forwarded by Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy."

The understanding that emerged from the U.S. naval quarantine in 1962 was that all offensive weapons would be removed, and, in President Kennedy's words, "kept out of the Hemisphere in the future." Unless those conditions continue to be met, the possibility of U. S. military action against the nearby Red threat cannot be ruled out.

Americans cannot sanguinely accept the building of a base for missile-bearing submarines in Cuba, if that is what the Russians are up to, because it matters little to the targets whether missiles are delivered from land or from a seaport base. The Russians would be miscalculating dreadfully, we believe, if they expect Richard Nixon to be any less alarmed over their machinations in Cuba than John Kennedy was, or the majority of American people to be less concerned about their security in 1970 than they were in 1962.